

## **Appendix A: MS Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy Development Process**

### **1. Process Overview**

The State Forester and Mississippi Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (FSCC) started the assessment process by first adopting the recommendations of the Natural Resources Planning Conference Report entitled the *Future of Mississippi's Natural Resource* -- an issue-based guidance document developed by Mississippi State University's College of Forest Resources during a planning conference of major stakeholders convened in May 2006. This comprehensive report clearly identified, with the assistance of a diverse group of participants, the emerging and established challenges and opportunities for Mississippi's forest resources, several key issues that need to be addressed and a draft set of overarching response strategies. This conference and the resulting published report provided the framework for the development of Mississippi's Assessment and Strategy.

Two public surveys (an on-line survey and mail) survey were developed to solicit additional input on the draft set of issues defined in the *Future of Mississippi's Natural Resources* report. Survey results and highlights in Appendix C.

MFC staff in conjunction with the members of the FWCC identified potential stakeholders for each issue and assigned a staff leader to work with stakeholders in developing a narrative for each of the issues in the conference that would also meet the Farm Bill requirements for the statewide assessment. Two staff leaders, Patrick Glass (former MFC employee) and Tympel Blansett coordinated the overall effort. A contract writer was enlisted to assist in the compilation of the reports. From the assessment, a set of overall statewide strategies was developed by the staff leaders, as the MFC Assessment and Strategy Working Group, in conjunction with stakeholders.

### **2. Public and Partner Involvement**

The FSCC provided oversight of the assessment and strategy development process and members actively participated in regular meetings held to discuss and draft components for each key issue area. In addition to FSCC members, other representatives of resource and economic development agencies, organizations, businesses and educational institutions were invited by staff leaders to participate in working sessions held throughout 2009 and 2010 on each issue area.

**Note: Insert list of all meetings here.**

The MFC also initiated the two public surveys in 2009 mentioned above to solicit opinions on priority resource issue and concerns, and used those results to further define forest resource concerns and areas of importance to Mississippians.

Drafts of the assessment and strategy documents were distributed to stakeholders for review in the spring of 2010 prior to submission to the US Forest Service and were posted on the MFC website with an invitation for review and comment via statewide press releases.

### **3. Primary Data Sources**

National guidance for the development of Statewide Forest Assessments and Strategies encouraged states to draw from existing data sources and layers including those provided by the National Assessment or developed from other planning documents such as the 2006 *Mississippi Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS)*, the *Mississippi Forest Legacy Assessment of Need* (approved in 2007), the *Southern Forestland Assessment* and most recent Forest Inventory and Analysis (*Mississippi Forests*, 2006) as well as the *Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment*. Key stakeholder issues were initially identified using *Future of Mississippi's Natural Resource* report and were prioritized using data from two public surveys conducted by MFC in 2009 (discussed above).

A complete list of references used in the development of this document are included in the body of the report.

### **4. Integration of Other Plans and Assessments**

MFC relied heavily on information from two recently approved federal conservation plans to develop this Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources and Forest Resource Strategy. The 2005 *Mississippi Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS)* developed by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks was used to help describe the condition of natural forest communities in the state. At the time of this report, the MDWFP was in the process of updating some elements of the CWCS such as the wildlife species of concern and threats to natural communities. Assessment writers met with the MDWFP staff in the Mississippi Natural Heritage Program in early 2010 to seek input and obtain draft updates of species and threats. Because MDWFP has not completed their updates, the draft information was consulted, but the approved 2005 report was used. A link to the current CWCS is in Appendix B.

The Mississippi CWCS provided the foundation for the development of new *Mississippi Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need (FLP AON)* which was approved in 2007. This document also describes the condition of the state's forest resources and uses that information to derive three areas of Mississippi

that are targets for the new Forest Legacy Program because of the threat of conversion to non-forest use. A link to the AON is also included in Appendix B.

MFC also enlisted the help of the writer, Elizabeth Rooks-Barber, who developed the approved CWCS and the FLP AON plans to also compile this assessment and strategy. The state coordinator for the FLP was also actively involved in writing the assessment and strategy, and served on the MFC Assessment and Strategy Working Group.

## **5. List of Preparers**

This document was produced with contributions from many staff from the MFC Assessment and Strategy Working Group including Tympel Blansett, Randy Chapin, Dennis Dauterive, Sandra Ford, Bruce Frasier, Patrick Glass, Brant Godbold, Kent Grizzard, Mark Hamilton, Richard McInnis, Rick Olsen, Randal Romedy and Wayne Tucker with oversight from the Mississippi Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee and with input from many stakeholder organizations, institutions, businesses, agencies and individuals.

The following individuals and organizations provided assistance, information, guidance and technical support in the development of the Assessment and Strategies.

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